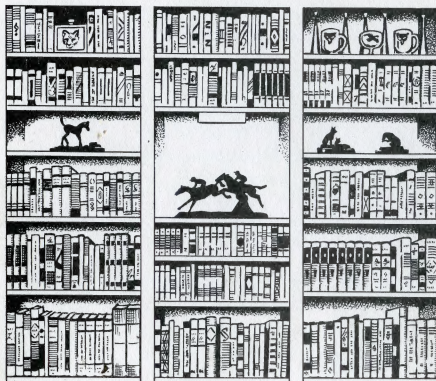


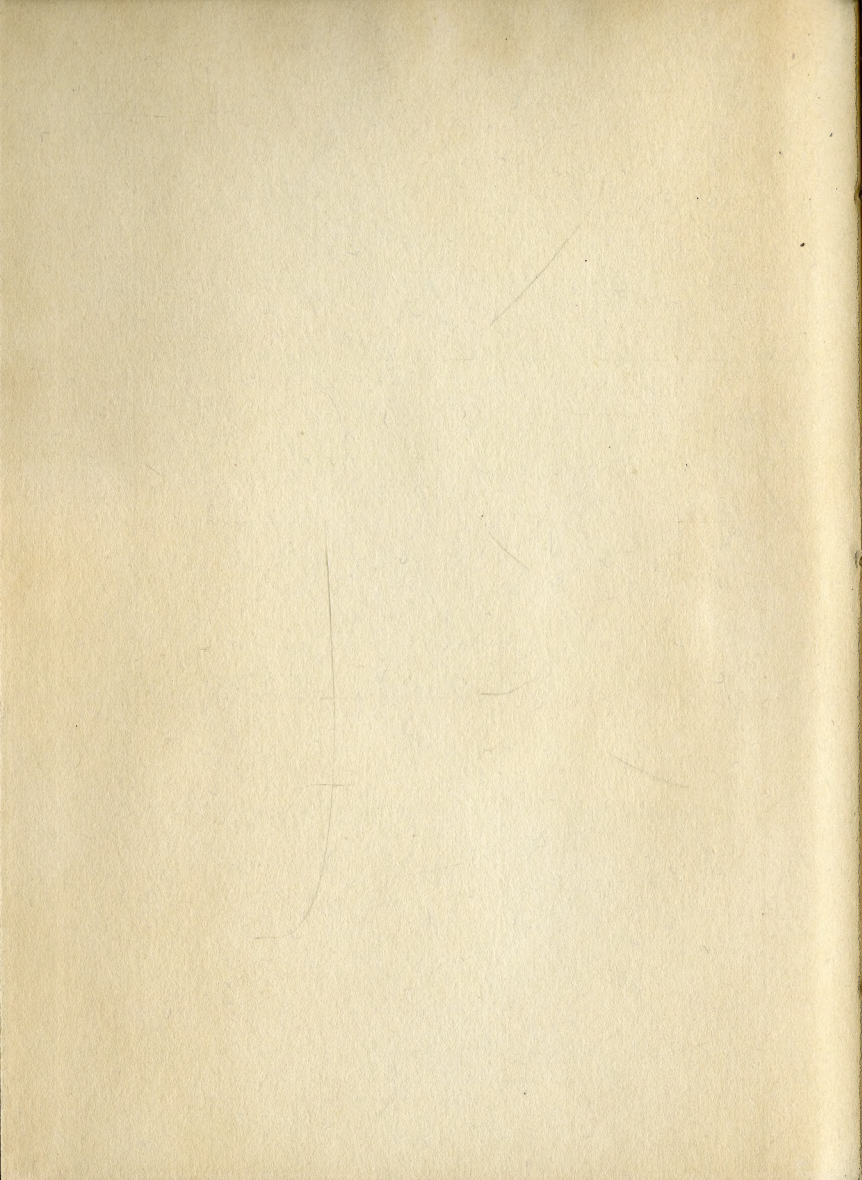
Notes on Fly-Fishing

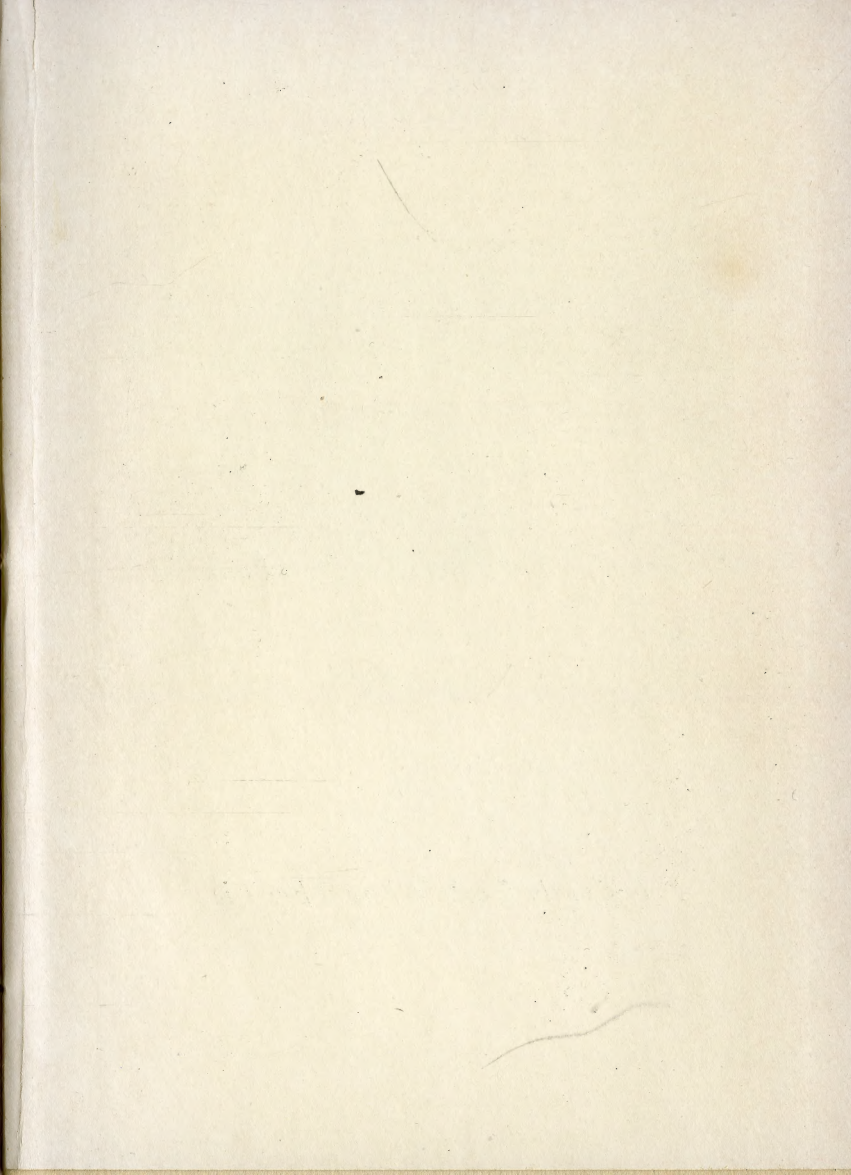


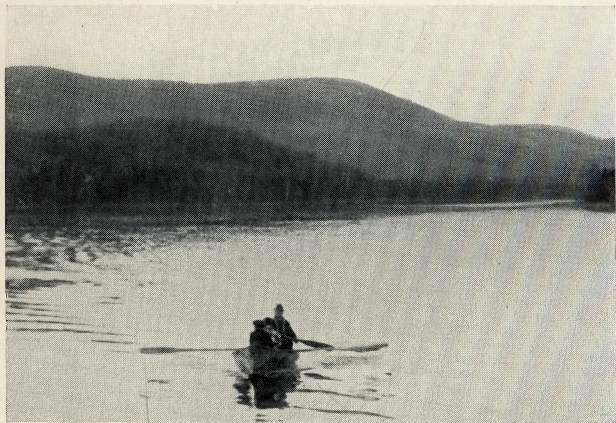
Colonel Henry A. Siegel



Ex Libris
JOHN AND MARTHA DANIELS







Off to the Pools Where They Lie

Notes *on* Fly-Fishing

BY

RAYMOND W. STANLEY



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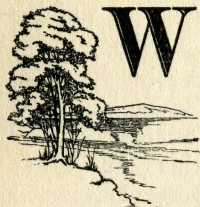
TO A TROUT

*O live, lithe gem of gorgeous birth,
Springing from icy waters clear
To wander restless, far and near,
Through crystal halls of liquid mirth!*

*Oh! swift, shy nymph, thy favorite nook,
Down by the old forsaken mill,
No longer shields thee from the ill
Temptation of a fly—and hook!*

ANON.

Notes on Fly-Fishing



WHAT would you rather do or go fishin'? Well, what would you rather do? At best a somewhat ambiguous and colloquial question, but to many of us there is but one answer—"Nothin'!"

To some, fishing means hooky from school, a slender willow pole, a line, a bent pin, and a struggling grasshopper; to others, a vacant desk in Wall-Street, a three-ounce Leonard rod, a braided silk line, a German silver feather-weight reel, a leader, and three artificial flies chosen with the acumen and precision of a great diagnostician. At this point we hear the voice of the cynic — "Yes, and the fellow with the bent pin and the cut pole gets all the fish and all the fun." But it's not because of his crude tackle that the conventionalized country fisherboy loads his sapling stringer with trout, but rather in spite of it. With his skill and knowledge plus the best tackle, he would probably get two strings where before he got but one.

In equipment the country boy is the antithesis of the Wall Street financier, but not necessarily so in skill or knowledge of the art of fishing for sport. And in fishing for sport there is a certain kinship

with art — for he who makes practical application of his knowledge or natural ability or skill to snare the underwater vertebrate with permanent gills is indeed an artist.

“Fisherman’s luck!” What a misleading phrase! How it piques the true connoisseur who really studies the habits and cunning of his befinned quarry! Can success, when it comes, be called fisherman’s luck? The successful angler acknowledges no such thing as fisherman’s luck, but rather an acquirable quality that would better be termed “fisherman’s skill.”

Some feel that they never would have the patience to sit for a protracted period listening to the swish and whirl of a line and rod as they whip the surface of a stream or lake with not so much as the swirl of a fish’s tail as requital for their pains. To the nimrod who knows from experience that the next cast may bring ample reward there is no sense of boredom. He is more likely sitting or standing on the very edge of nothing, his eyes glued to the dancing wake of his drop fly, wondering if his catch will be large enough to warrant mounting.

There are many forms of sport fishing and each has its devotees. Some prefer “plugging” or fishing well below the surface with worms or other live bait, while many like to troll several hundred feet of line behind a motor or man-propelled boat. Then there is bait casting, deep-sea fishing, and

countless other ways for catching fish of various sizes from a one-ounce smelt to a 600-pound tuna fish. It's largely a matter of taste, but a certain delicacy, poetry, and nicety is peculiar to fly-fishing that an enthusiast will tell you is lacking in all other types.

Fly-casting is the "white collar" job of sport fishing, and as is usually true in business, the results are greater. Then, too, other forms of killing game fish are being considered more and more unsportsmanlike, and the zealots of fly-fishing are establishing a still stricter code of etiquette that will place the sport on a still higher plane.

It is the purpose of this article to champion lake or pond fly-fishing for trout as opposed to bait-fishing, but there is still left the task of choosing between two forms of fly-fishing, each of which differs from the other in use and equipment. These are known as the wet-fly method and the dry-fly method. Of the two the former is the older, and the one that is by far the more popular today. It has been during only the last twenty-five years that dry-fly fishing, as originated in England, has become sufficiently in vogue to warrant consideration by the average angler. The wet-fly method consists of casting one or more flies attached to a leader with a light rod and then dragging the fly or flies either on or slightly below the water's surface. The dry-fly method requires specially made flies, that more nearly

resemble the natural flies found on lake or pond, and are made so that they will float on the surface for a considerable length of time. When the dry fly starts to sink, it is whipped into the air and dried by a number of false casts before being returned to the water. At certain intervals it is necessary to apply to the dry fly a bit of paraffin oil and to the leader and part of the line a rubbing of deer fat. The chief task in dry-fly fishing is to keep the fly floating freely on the surface, letting the current and wind furnish its movement. This method is considered closer to nature in the appearance and action of the lure and is supposed by its advocates to fool the more educated fish that fail to respond to the ordinary wet fly.

Except in the actual construction of the fly and method of casting, dry-fly and wet-fly fishing do not differ. The striking or hooking is the same in both cases. The dry fly is allowed to act as the wind and current dictate, while with the wet fly the angler provides this animation by dragging the flies over the water, a process that is known as "fishing the fly." In both types the skill required of the fisherman is about the same.

To advise the use of one method to the exclusion of the other would indeed be unwise. It is far better to go to your fishing ground prepared to follow whichever type seems the more desirable under the actual conditions that are encountered.



The Result of a Taste for Flies



Perhaps to the true angler the pleasure that comes from getting ready to go fishing is nearly as great as the actual fishing itself. With the first March thaw the rods, reels, flies, and other equipment are fished out of their hibernating retreats and examined for imperfections, and to the expert fly-fisherman even slight imperfections are not permitted to exist for long.

Among the pleasures of preparation one of the most important is the selection of the right place to fish. The state whose trout waters have suffered the least depletion among our Eastern States is Maine, and even there it is necessary to push far back into the unbeaten tracts to get good fishing. The best fishing is to be had where the trees and bushes have not been cut from the banks of the large and small contributory streams, as this condition reduces the flow and purity of the water, so that brook trout cannot live and propagate. The angler must make sure that he is headed for a real trout section. This cannot be done by reading the folders of any of the innumerable fishing camps, for they all hold out equal promise of success. Again, advice from a friend is often misleading, as he may prefer one particular kind of trout fishing to the exclusion of others. It would appear that one must first choose for himself whether it is quantity or quality of fish that he is after. If you would catch great numbers of trout, no matter where you go, they

will necessarily be small, and if you would catch large fish, they will necessarily be few. It is a question of personal taste, and as such one that must be decided for himself by each individual angler.

About as good a plan of action as any is to get into the very heart of a good fishing region and then pick up as much local gossip as can be had from both natives and sportsmen on the condition of the fishing in the neighboring streams, ponds, and lakes. The two great fishing regions in Maine are in the Rangeley and Bangor sections. This territorial classification naturally includes the trout waters within a very wide radius. It is usually true that the places that are the hardest to reach are less fished, and therefore offer the best opportunity for success.

For the beginner who desires to learn something of fly-fishing it is important that he start right by procuring the proper equipment. It is very easy to make the mistake of purchasing tackle which seems just the thing at home, only to find that it is clumsy and ineffectual when actually tried out on the fishing grounds. Fly-fishing, like golf, requires great delicacy of technique, and it is just as important that the equipment be in keeping with the spirit and demands of the sport. The first thought in such a case should naturally be given to the most important single article — a rod. In fly-fishing a good rod is absolutely essential

to enjoyment of the sport. It must be hand-made, light, and strong. Rods are usually made with three joints, — a butt, middle, and tip; an extra tip is always furnished with each rod. A rod should have perfect balance and inherent qualities of pliancy and resiliency. It is made from bamboo, bethabara, greenheart, and lancewood, but it is almost the universal opinion of experienced anglers that the best and most serviceable fly rods are made of six-strip split Calcutta or Tonkin bamboo. Bamboo has an outside shell known as the enameled part, that contributes to its strength and makes the rod moisture proof. Rods vary in length from $8\frac{1}{2}$ to 10 feet and are from 3 to $6\frac{3}{4}$ ounces in weight. Some of the features of the best fly rods that should be carefully watched for in making a selection are, bronze snake guides, a skeleton reel seat below the handle, agate tip and butt ring guides, silk windings, and a solid cork handle with “swelled” or shaped handgrasp.

The reel for fly-fishing should be a single-action click reel, preferably with a click release. It should be chosen after the rod has been selected, and then chiefly for its balance on the rod, as good balance will enable the fisherman to cast for hours without the least sign of wrist fatigue. Care should be taken that the reel chosen is not too light for the rod. A rod of say $3\frac{1}{2}$ ounces requires a reel of about 5 ounces, and for a rod of $4\frac{1}{2}$ ounces a reel of $6\frac{3}{4}$ ounces. With a $3\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce rod and a $5\frac{1}{4}$ -

ounce reel, the point of balance of the rod with the reel on it should be approximately 16 inches from the butt end of the rod.

The line used for fly-casting is usually silk-enameled, waterproofed, and preferably tapered. It may be of either American or English make. Taking as a standard the 3½-ounce rod, it is well to select a size G or H line and with larger rods, size E or I.

The best leaders are made of silkworm gut, and the size needed depends upon the weight of the fish that are to be caught. Leaders must be at least one foot shorter than the rod. For dry-fly fishing the leader has a loop for only one fly and should be a tapered or flat leader, while for wet-fly fishing the leader is seldom tapered and has loops for one, two, or three flies.

The question of what flies should be purchased is an extremely difficult one to answer, as the variations in type of fishing necessitate flies of various sorts and sizes. It is well to stick to three sizes on No. 8, 10, and 12 hooks. A good plan to follow is to stock up well with a generous quantity of the standard flies of both wet and dry variety and then let the conditions and results on the actual fishing ground dictate their use. Other helpful accessories are fly books, a landing net, scales, a tin tackle box, a repair kit, and a small pocket camera.

There are various factors which will materially



Caught in One Hour and a Quarter



affect the degree of success of the angler. The first of these is the season of the year. From the latter part of May to the middle of July is usually the time when trout will rise well to a fly. In April there is such an abundance of underwater food that the surface fly is rarely taken. During August, when there are thousands of caddis flies on the water, fly-fishing becomes good again, and it is then that some of the largest fish of the season are taken. For a short period, right after the ice goes out of the lakes, fly-fishing for some of the larger and older fish is excellent, but this type of fish differs radically in appearance and habits from the square-tailed brook trout. Brook trout do not rise to an artificial fly when they can get underwater food, such as creepers, worms, and flesh foods, that is brought in when the snow water is running. Of course it helps to be able to choose the season for fishing, but almost any time between May 30 and July 1 the angler can get his fill of good fishing. Late in August and during September the fishing is at its very best.

Another factor which materially affects fly-fishing is the direction and force of the wind. Usually, if the wind is from the west or south the fish will rise well to a fly; if it is from the east or north they will rise only occasionally, or not at all. The force of the wind has an equally important effect on fly-fishing. During the day there must be sufficient breeze to cause a ripple on the water,

otherwise trout will not rise to artificial flies, as they can see the leader to which the flies are attached. If the wind is too strong it makes casting difficult, and adds the complication of handling a boat. Often in a strong wind the boat will be blown so rapidly over the surface that the trout seldom have time to see a fly before it has passed by. There have been many theories advanced as to why trout fishing is best during or after a wind, and the most plausible one seems to be that after a protracted calm the water gets so "stale" from lack of oxygen that the fish become sluggish and stay far down near the bottom. On the other hand, when a strong wind has been blowing the water naturally absorbs large quantities of oxygen, which invigorates the trout and causes them to rush at flies with renewed vigor. In other words, fish, like humans who breathe bad air, become sluggish in water that needs refreshment. When fishing on a lake in a high wind, it is well to go to the side of the lake from which the wind is coming and fish fairly close to the shore, where the water is calmer, due to the sheltering effect of the high trees that border a lake or pond in the woods. The best fly-fishing usually comes during that hour between sundown and dark, after a windy day, when the surface of the water has taken on a glassy calm.

The temperature of the water has a marked effect upon the fish, and therefore on the fishing.

In the spring, when the waters are very cold, the best fishing usually occurs near the shore and on shoals and bars, where the water is warmer, since in early spring, trout seek the warmest places. Later, when the whole waters of a lake or pond have been warmed by the hot rays of a summer sun, it is again the water near the shore that is subject to the greatest change, and because of its high temperature the trout seek the deep and cooler waters and live on underwater food. In the late summer or fall, offshore water is somewhat cooler than the deep water, and the trout prefer these shallow places as a relief from the warm depths of which they have tired. Of course, in rivers and streams where the water moves swiftly, the temperature is more nearly uniform than in lakes or ponds, and therefore temperature is of less consequence.

The effect of light or shade on fly-fishing is perhaps a factor whose importance is disputed more than any of the others. One angler will claim that a dull day is absolutely necessary to a real good day's fly-fishing, while another, equally expert, will stand firmly by his belief that a bright day with a ripple on the water provides the proper conditions. In fact there is such a wide variation of opinion on the light and shade question that it may be regarded as somewhat of an individual superstition with each angler and one that can be disregarded altogether.

Thunderstorms make poor fly-fishing only up to the exact instant of the breaking of the storm. Perhaps the best fishing that can be had comes during and after a heavy thunderstorm. It is said to be due to the fact that such violent storms are preceded by hot sultry days, when the atmosphere hangs heavily over the water and drives the trout to deep pools. With the sudden change in atmospheric conditions that comes when the storm breaks, the relief from this oppressive state is instantly noticeable to the fish, which experience a complete change in humor and rise jubilantly and sportively, like a bather on a hot day enjoying a refreshing plunge in a cool pool.

Other factors being equal, the time of day, with the exception of the "sundown to dusk" period, has slight effect on the degree of success of the fly-fisherman. It is true, however, that during the heat of the day when the sun is high, fly-fishing is apt to slow down somewhat, particularly if there is insufficient breeze to cause a fair ripple on the surface.

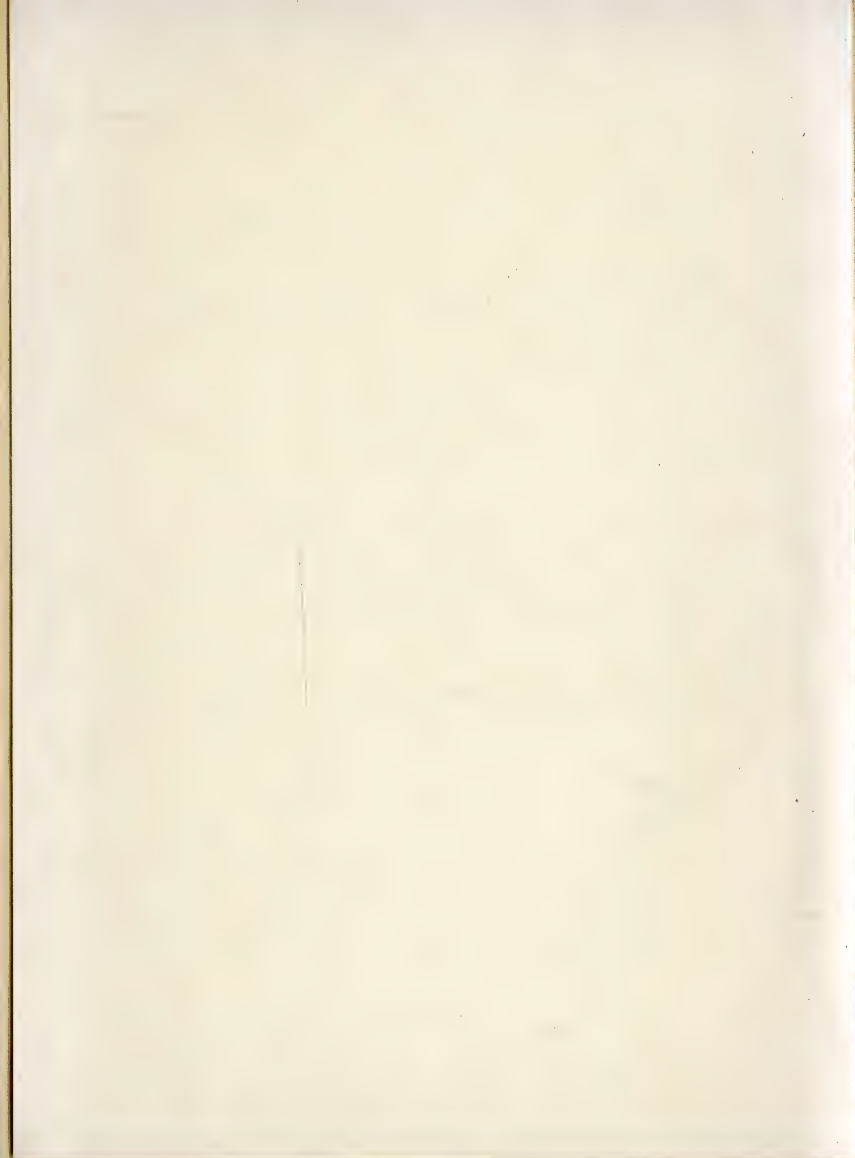
The final and to some a most important factor of fly-fishing is the selection of the proper type and size of fly to be used as a lure. It is practically impossible to give a set rule as to which fly should be used, but a few words regarding the practices of experts may prove helpful as a guide. In the first place, there is an old adage that in general is accepted as being a rather sensible rule to follow:



Wet Flies



Dry Flies



“On dark days use bright flies, and on bright days use dark flies.” In judging this condition the angler should not be influenced by the lightness or darkness of the water, but rather by the chiar-oscuro of the sky. It is the sky that furnishes the background for the fly on the surface or a few inches beneath the water, because obviously flies are viewed by the trout from a point under the water. Trout are always looking from a dark to a light area, even during evening hours, and the fly that furnishes the greatest contrast with the sky as a background is the one most easily seen by the fish. A light fly contrasts with a dark sky and *vice versa*. Wet and dry flies of some of the more popular varieties may be classified as Light, Medium, and Dark, as follows:

WET FLIES

LIGHT	MEDIUM	DARK
White Miller	Queen of the Water	Black Gnat
Royal Coachman	Grizzly King	Brown Hackle
Parmachenee Belle	Professor	Montreal
Jenny Lind	Grey Hackle	Silver Doctor
Gray Drake	Light Cow Dung	Hawthorne
Reuben Wood	Gray Drake	Red Ibis

DRY FLIES

LIGHT	MEDIUM	DARK
Silver Sedge	Red Ant	Black Gnat
Coachman	Wickham's Fancy	Greenwell's Glory
Pale Evening Dun	Hare's Ear	Hofland's Fancy
May Fly	Jenny Spinner	Red Spinner
White Miller	Olive Dun	Dark Sage
Parmachenee Belle	Alder	March Brown

Save for the suggestion as to the use of light or dark lures it must be left for the angler to judge for himself the productivity of a particular fly. It is a good idea to give them all a rather general tryout rather than to stick stubbornly to any one kind.

Once the actual fishing has begun, it will be found that it is one thing to cast a wet or dry fly and another to hook or "strike" a fish that has risen. Small and medium-sized trout will be found to jump at the lure in a headlong rush, and will even rise six or seven times in succession if he is not hurt by the point of the hook. Big trout are very slow in responding to the lures, and when they do rise there is no impetuous rush, but rather a slow swirl or roll that is deliberate and canny. Striking a fish consists of a backward snap of the wrist, which is developed into a full back cast if the fish is not hooked, and instantly followed by a forward cast to the exact spot where the rise occurred. A snappy fast rise should be met with a snappy fast strike, and a slow rolling rise by a slow but firm strike. The novice is apt to strike too soon and too hard, but he will shortly get the feel or knack of the trick and once mastered it is never lost. Most fly-fishing is done with the rod held in one hand and several feet of loose line drawn out from the reel and held between the thumb and forefinger of the other. This is called "striking from a hand-held line" and

permits better control of the line at all times than when it is reel held.

When trout are caught in large quantities, the sportsmanlike thing to do is to keep only those that are injured to such an extent that they may die. All others are returned to the water as soon as the hook has been removed. Few fishermen care to return home to the city following a week or two of fishing without some tangible evidence of their skill, and the laws of Maine are liberal in permitting this to be done. This requires a good method of packing. After the fish have been cleaned and wiped dry they should be sprinkled with a few grains of salt and then wrapped individually in porous paper, or better still in cotton cloth, and packed firmly in a box that is strong and as air tight as possible. Fish will keep from three to four days and will make as good eating as if they were just caught an hour before.

Fly-fishing is a sport that is not limited by the sex, size, or age of the enthusiast. Some of the very best fly-fishing is done by women. The longer a person has followed the art the more he knows of trout lore and fly-fishing wrinkles. It is certain that whoever takes up the sport cannot help benefiting mentally and physically from such a delightful pastime.

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